

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 5 and 10 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1 through 4, 6 through 9, and 14 through 16 and add Claims 17 through 20 to read, as follows.

1. **(Currently Amended)** An image forming apparatus comprising:

a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers forming latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image at the latent images;

a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and

contacting member ~~means~~ separably contacting to said intermediate transfer body at a contacting position,

wherein ~~Wherein~~ said image carrier located most closely to said contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to said contacting position, defines a first image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a first transfer position,

wherein ~~Wherein~~ said image carrier located most closely to said contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on an upstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to said contacting position, defines a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto a transfer material after passing through said first transfer position and said second transfer position again, [[and]]

wherein formula $L_a - S_a \geq L_m$ is satisfied where a distance from said contacting position to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as L_a , where a distance from said exposing position on said first image carrier to said first transfer position along the [[th]] moving direction of said first image carrier is set as S_a , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as L_m , and

wherein latent image formation on said first image carrier is done at a time different from a contacting operation of said contacting member. [[L_m .]]

2. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said contacting member means is a means for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

3. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said contacting member means is a means for cleaning toner remaining after transfer of the toner image from the said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

4. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising another contacting member to contact with said intermediate transfer

~~body, said contacting member contacting with said intermediate transfer body nearer said second transfer position than said another contacting member at a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body. wherein said contacting means, in a case where the plural means come in contact with said intermediate transfer body, is the mean contacting, at the nearest position to said first transfer position, on an upstream side of said first transfer position in the moving direction on the said intermediate transfer body.~~

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers forming latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image at the latent images;

a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and

contacting member ~~means~~ separably contacting to said intermediate transfer body at a contacting position,

wherein said image carrier located most closely to said contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to said contacting position, defines a first image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a first transfer position,

wherein said image carrier located most closely to said contacting position in a direction extending along said intermediate transfer body on an upstream side in a moving

direction of said intermediate transfer body with respect to said contacting position, defines a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto a transfer material after passing through said first transfer position and said second transfer position again, [[and]]

wherein formula $L_b + S_b \geq L_m$ is satisfied where a distance from said contacting position to said second transfer position along the moving route of said intermediate transfer body in a direction reverse to the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as L_b , where a distance from said exposing position on said second image carrier to said second transfer position along the move of said second image carrier is set as S_b , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as L_m , and

wherein latent image formation on said second image carrier is done at a time different from a contacting operation of said contacting member. [[L_m .]]

7. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said contacting member means is a means for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

8. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said contacting member means is a means for cleaning toner remaining after transfer of the toner image from the said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

9. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising another contacting member to contact with said intermediate transfer body, said contacting member contacting with said intermediate transfer body nearer said second transfer position than said another contacting member at a downstream side in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body. ~~wherein said contacting means, in a case where the plural means come in contact with said intermediate transfer body, is the mean contacting, at the nearest position to said second transfer position, on a downstream side of said second transfer position in the moving direction on the said intermediate transfer body.~~

10. **(Canceled)**

11. **(Original)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein formula $L_b + S_b + L_a - S_a > L_m$ is satisfied where a distance from said contacting position to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as L_a , and where a distance from said exposing position on said first image carrier to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as S_a .

12. **(Original)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 11, wherein a toner image formation position on the intermediate transfer body is moved on an upstream side with respect to the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body at each image formation where images are formed successively.

13. **(Original)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6, wherein formula $L_b + S_b + L_a - S_a < L_m$ is satisfied where a distance from said contacting position to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body is set as L_a , and where a distance from said exposing position on said first image carrier to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as S_a , and wherein a toner image formation position on the intermediate transfer body is moved on an upstream side with respect to the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body at each image formation where images are formed successively.

14. **(Currently Amended)** An image forming apparatus comprising:

- a plurality of movable image carriers, said image carriers forming latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image at the latent images;
- a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from said image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and
- contacting member ~~means~~ separably contacting to said intermediate transfer body,
- wherein said image carrier located on an upstream side of said contacting member ~~means~~ in a moving direction of said intermediate transfer body, among said plural image carriers, defines a first image carrier, whereas said image carrier located on a downstream side of said first image carrier in the moving direction of said intermediate transfer body, defines a second image carrier where a position for transfer between said first image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a first transfer position and where a position for transfer between said second image carrier and said intermediate transfer body defines a second transfer position,

wherein a toner image formed on said intermediate transfer body is transferred onto a transfer material after passing through said first transfer position and said second transfer position again,

wherein formula $L_c + S_a - S_b \geq L_m$ is satisfied where a distance from said exposing position on said first image carrier to said first transfer position along the moving direction of said first image carrier is set as S_a , where a distance from said exposing position on said ~~second image~~ ~~second image~~ carrier to said second transfer position along the moving direction ~~direction~~ of said second image carrier is set as S_b , where a distance from said first transfer position to said second transfer position along the moving direction of the intermediate transfer body is set as L_c , and where an image length formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as L_m , and

wherein latent image formation on said first image carrier, latent image formation on said second image carrier, and contacting operation of said contacting member ~~means~~ are done at times different from each other.

15. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said contacting member ~~means~~ is a means for transferring the toner image from said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

16. **(Currently Amended)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said contacting member ~~means~~ is a means for cleaning toner remaining after transfer of the toner image from the said intermediate transfer body to said transfer material.

17. **(New)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14,
wherein the contacting operation of the contacting member is done after finishing to form
a latent image on the first image carrier and before starting to form a latent image on the
second image carrier.

18. **(New)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 1,
the image length L_m formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image
which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.

19. **(New)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 6
the image length L_m formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image
which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.

20. **(New)** The image forming apparatus according to claim 14,
the image length L_m formed on said intermediate transfer body is set as a longest image
which the image forming apparatus can form on the intermediate transfer body.